

**And remind (others), for the reminder most certainly benefits the Believers  
Surah Zhāriyāt, verse 55**

## CLARIFICATION ON FEMALE HAIR CUTTING

**T**his article is to clarify a common argument in support of the permissibility of women cutting their hair. Some have quoted the narration of Abu Salma bin Abdur-Rahman, which appears further on in this article, to prove the permissibility of females cutting or shortening their hair. In this narration it appears that Hazrat Ayesha (radhiyallahu anha) the wife of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) had shortened her hair after the demise of Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). However, the matter is not as straightforward as it appears. The very first thing to remember is that it is not permissible for laymen to attempt to proof a mas'ala directly from Quran and Hadeeth. This is the main reason why people are misled and end up making incorrect assumptions and arrive at false conclusions. Understanding and interpreting Quran and Sunnah is the work of the Imams of the Mazh-habs. The Muslim laymen should make taqleed or follow what these Imams and the Scholars after them had written. It is not possible for followers of the mazh-habs to endeavour to deduce or extract laws of Shariah directly from Quran and Hadeeth. Whereas the Ulema who possess the ability to make ijtihaad (which is an in-depth study of the Quran and Hadeeth) are fully equipped to execute such a task.

I will reproduce below in simple terms what the Muslim Jurists have said regarding this narration of Abu Salma. This will, Insha-Allah, put the matter in perspective.

1) Before providing details I must state that the translation rendered for the above narration is incorrect. Many a time when a verse of Quran or a hadeeth of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) is incorrectly translated, the reader is confused and ends up with an erroneous understanding. The translation was given as follows: *"The wives of the Prophet (pbuh) used to cut their hair until it came just below their ears."* This translation is wrong. I reproduce the exact Arabic text with the correct translation.

وَكَانَ أَزْوَاجُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَأْخُذْنَ مِنْ رُءُوسِهِنَّ حَتَّى تَكُونَ كَالْوَفْرَةِ

*"The wives of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) would remove their hair so that it became like the wafrah".* Wafrah means hair that falls onto the shoulders, not below the ears, as the incorrect translation suggests. Furthermore, the narrator says *kal-wafrah*, i.e. *like the wafrah*, meaning the hair was not exactly shoulder length, but it appeared like that to the onlooker. This signifies that the hair might have been even longer than what it appeared to be.

2) Abu Salmah is narrating what he saw as Hazrat Ayesha was demonstrating the method of ghusl to them. It must be noted that Abu Salma was a milk mahram to Hazrat Ayesha (radhiyallahu anha) on account of him being breastfed by her sister, Umme Kulthoom. The full narration states that he and Abdullah bin Zaid, another “milk’ brother of Hazrat Ayesha, came to her to enquire about the method of ghusl. To demonstrate the ghusl to them, she called for a tub of water and then went behind a screen to have a bath. All they could see of her was the section of her body from her neck upwards. It is within this context that Abu Salma made the statement about the hair.

3) Abu Salma says: “the wives of The Messenger”, yet he only saw the hair of one wife, viz. Hazrat Ayesha; he hadn’t seen the other wives, and how could he, when he was not a mahram to any of them. This means that Abu Salmah made an assumption based on what he had seen of the hair of Hazrat Ayesha (radhiyallahu anhaa). He merely assumed that the other wives adopted the same hair style. Then again, sometimes narrators would use a plural term while referring to only one. This is done out of respect. Therefore, we cannot conclude from this that it was the practice of all the wives to shorten their hair.

4) This statement of Abu Salma does not constitute a ruling of Shariah. All it does is to convey an action of one of the wives of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). There can be reasons for this action. In some kitabs it appears that as Hazrat Ayesha grew older, her hair started falling out. This could be why her hair was described as “short”. The action of one Sahaabi, male or female, does not represent a standard law of Shariah, until it is supported by texts of Quran and Hadeeth. An example of this is Hazrat Ayesha’s involvement in the battle of the Camel, which was fought against the forces of Hazrat Ali (radhiyallahu anhaa). The Ulema are unanimous that Hazrat Ayesha (radhiyallahu anhaa) had made an error of judgement in supporting this battle. In fact, she herself regretted this action of hers afterwards. On this basis, people cannot claim today that it is now permissible for a woman to lead an army in war. Another lady among the Sahaaba (radhiyallahu anhum), Umme Khallad, led people in jamaat salaah at her home, as an Imam. Yet all the Jurists are unanimous that it is haraam for a woman to lead men in jamaat salaah. Here again, we have a case of an individual act that does not constitute standard Shar’ee Law.

5) Assuming the wives of Allah’s Messenger did shorten their hair, it must be noted that after the demise of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) his wives did not have any reason to maintain personal beauty. It was as if they were permanently in “iddat”, because they could never ever re-marry; hence, they did not need to keep themselves attractive. And long hair for a woman is indeed an attractive asset. In verse 31 of Surah Noor, wherein Allah Ta’ala commands “the covering of her beauty”, Ulema of Tafseer say the hair of a woman is included in this beauty. Assuming Hazrat Ayesha or any other wife did cut her hair, this was only done after the demise of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). It was never done in his lifetime. This shows that there was a specific reason for this, and it was not standard procedure. Imam Nawawi states in his commentary on the narration of Abu Salma: *“This (that they did not cut*

*their hair in the lifetime of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) is in fact, confirmed. It cannot be imagined that they did so in the lifetime of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam)”*

6) The wives of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) were different to the other ladies of the Ummat. This is even mentioned in the Holy Quran. The ordinary female ummati cannot just follow everything they did. Assuming Hazrat Ayesha did cut her hair short, she neither encouraged others to do this, nor did she cite any hadeeth to support this action. An individual action does not make the Law. Law is made from the general principles of Quran and Sunnah.

7) On the assumption that the wives of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) did indeed shorten their hair, they never did so out of imitation of a western, kuffar fashion. In those days the fashion was to keep long hair. Nowadays when women cut their hair, in most cases it is done to emulate a certain fashion or trend that was created by kuffar.

8) During the time of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) the sunnah hair length for men was called *Jumma*, which means hair that fall onto the shoulders. At times, but not always, this was the length of the hair of Allah’s Messenger himself, as well as some Sahaaba. Even today this is sunnah for menfolk. Furthermore, there is a hadeeth in Saheeh Bukhari stating that women who imitate men are cursed. This is an explicit statement that makes imitation of men haraam. There can be no doubt that an act that is cursed by Allah and His Rasool must be haraam. When one combines the above two premises, the obvious and inescapable conclusion is that keeping shoulder-hair length by females is an imitation of men, and is, therefore, haraam. In the time of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) women carried hair that was longer than the *jumma* length of menfolk. There was, therefore, no resemblance with menfolk.

As stated in an earlier article, the above is one reason for cutting of female hair being haraam. Another reason is imitation of kuffar. Then there is a third reason, and that is: altering the natural creation of Allah, an act prohibited in verse 119 of Surah Nisaa. In that verse Allah Ta’ala mentions the vow that Shaytaan took, which was to entice and exhort people to change the natural creation in which Allah made mankind. This altering of Allah’s creation is found in shaving the beard, tattooing the body, shaving or cutting of hair by a female, etc.

It was also claimed that *“to consider something haram we will need strong and explicit directives from the Qur'an or the Established Sunnah.”* This claim is not entirely correct. Whoever made this statement is not aware that there are different levels or degrees of haraam. Some are lesser in sin than others, though all are forbidden. Those sins that are established through absolute proof are of the highest category of haraam, such as murder, fornication, adultery, drinking khamr, and similar acts. Actions and practices that are prohibited through a lesser category of proofs will be haraam to a lesser degree, and so forth. In Surah A’raaf, verse 33, Allah Ta’ala says: ***Say (O Muhammad)! Your Lord has only made haraam shameless acts, both external and internal, and (He has made haraam) sin, and unjust rebellion... ....***

I quoted just the first part of the verse to illustrate my point. In this verse Allah used the Arabic verb *harrama* which translates: “He has made haraam”. Allah Ta’la declares acts of open or

hidden lewdness as haraam, as well as sin in general. Here sins are mentioned in a general sense, yet not all sin are equal in their severity, in spite of which the Holy Quran declares **all** sins to be haraam. We thus learn from this verse that all forms of sin are haraam, but in various degrees. Some are more, or less severe than others. Which is why the Jurists classify sin as Haraam, Makrooh Tahreemi, etc.

There are so many sins that happen in the world today, but none of them have been explicitly mentioned in the Holy Quran or Sunnah; yet we believe these are definitely haraam and forbidden; sins such as gambling at the slot machines, pornography, various forms of interest in modern transactions, human trafficking, to mention a few. There is no “explicit directive” prohibiting these. However, the Jurists will use the accepted and well-established principles of Quran and Sunnah to prove the prohibition of these sins, and will classify them as haraam. The same can be said about the cutting of hair by females.

Allah Ta’ala knows best

*Zhul-Qa’dah 1441*

*July 2020*

*“Glory be to that Being Who  
adorned men with beards and  
adorned women with tresses”*

*The above is said to be a Thikr of the Malaaikah, as  
narrated in the hadeeth work, Kashful-Khifaa*

*The Al-Farooq Newsletter is a periodical published and edited by Mufti Siraj Desai of Madresa  
Abubakr Siddeeq, Malabar, Port Elizabeth*